

Daines	Johnson	Portman
Durbin	Kaine	Roberts
Enzi	King	Rounds
Ernst	Kirk	Sanders
Feinstein	Klobuchar	Schatz
Fischer	Leahy	Sessions
Franken	Manchin	Shaheen
Gardner	McCain	Stabenow
Grassley	McCaskill	Sullivan
Hatch	McConnell	Tester
Heitkamp	Mikulski	Thune
Heller	Moran	Tillis
Hirono	Murkowski	Vitter
Hoeven	Murray	Whitehouse
Inhofe	Nelson	Wicker
Isakson	Peters	

## NAYS—34

Blumenthal	Heinrich	Rubio
Booker	Lankford	Sasse
Brown	Lee	Schumer
Carper	Markey	Scott
Casey	Menendez	Shelby
Corker	Merkley	Toomey
Cotton	Murphy	Udall
Crapo	Paul	Warner
Cruz	Perdue	Warren
Donnelly	Reed	Wyden
Flake	Reid	
Gillibrand	Risch	

## NOT VOTING—1

Graham

The bill (H.R. 22), as amended, was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

# PROHIBITING FEDERAL FUNDING OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION OF AMERICA—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 169, S. 1881.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 169, S. 1881, a bill to prohibit Federal funding of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

## CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

## CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to S. 1881, a bill to prohibit Federal funding of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Mitch McConnell, James M. Inhofe, Rand Paul, Pat Roberts, Ben Sasse, James Lankford, Joni Ernst, Daniel Coats, Cory Gardner, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, Johnny Isakson, Lindsey Graham, Michael B. Enzi, Jerry Moran, Tim Scott, John Cornyn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

## THE HIGHWAY BILL

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I know the Senator from California, Mrs. BOXER, and I both want to thank a lot of people who worked very hard. People don't realize how many people are involved. Quite frankly, a little bit of guilt always comes to me, because this

is my sixth highway reauthorization bill, and it always ends up that I don't work as long as all the staff works. They are up many nights until midnight and many nights all night long.

This was a good bill. It was tough doing it. From this point forward, we have the opportunity to send it to the House. I have already had communication with some of the House Members who do want a multiyear bill. The staffs are working together as we speak to pull it together so we can pass one and get out of this long string of short-term extensions. They don't serve any useful purpose.

I wish to mention the names and to get them in the RECORD of those people who really put in the long hours. In my office is Alex Herrgott. He has been with me—we have been together, I guess—over a dozen years. He is the leader on our side. He put together a great team, including Shant Boyajian, who is the guy who was the transportation expert on our end, and he did a great job. We have had others just about as good as he is in the past, but they all sweat. This guy doesn't do it. He does it with a smile on his face. We have Chaya Koffman. She came with incredible experience. We couldn't have done it without her. It is equally important to thank David Napoliello and Andrew Dohrman. David and Andrew work for Senator BOXER and are experts within the office, working on this alongside our staff.

It is kind of interesting because Senator BOXER and I can't get any further apart philosophically. She is a very proud liberal, and I am a very proud conservative. We would be fighting like cats and dogs over these regulations that are putting Americans out of business. But, today, we think alike, and we are working together. I am so proud of her staff working with my staff.

Bettina. There is Bettina, and she is probably the No. 1 hard working person, sitting in the back here on that side, and whom we really appreciate. Some days I don't appreciate her, but I have all during this process.

So many others have made contributions to the success today. It is important to thank on my staff Susan Bodine, for her work on environmental provisions, and also Jennie Wright and Andrew Neely. I wish to thank my communications team, including Donelle Harder, Daisy Letendre, and Kristina Baum. They have to get the message out as to what we are doing, how significant it is.

People who are witnessing this today are witnessing the most popular bill of this entire year. We can go back to any of the 50 States, and they are all going to say the one thing we want is a transportation system. It is not just that they want this bill. This is what the Constitution says we are supposed to be doing. Article I, section 8 of the Constitution says to defend America and provide for roads and bridges, and that is what we accomplished today.

There are some others outside of our committee I want to thank: Chairman

HATCH, Chairman THUNE, Chairman SHELBY, and their staffs, including Chris Campbell, Mark Prater, David Schweibert, Shannon Hines, and Jen Deci. I want to thank our leader, MITCH MCCONNELL, who really came through to put this at top priority. Without that priority, we couldn't have done it. I know Sharon Soderstrom, Hazen Marshall, Neil Chatterjee, Jonathan Burks, and Brendan Dunn were all involved.

If my colleagues would just permit me, 10 years ago today is the last time we passed a significant, multiyear bill. I remember standing right here at this podium, right when this moment came, and it was time to thank all of these people who worked so hard. All of a sudden the sirens went off and the buzzers—evacuate, evacuate; bomb, bomb. Everyone left, but I hadn't made my speech yet. So I stood there and made it longer than I probably should have. There is nothing more eerie than standing here in the Chamber when nobody else is here and everybody else is gone. After a while, I thought that I had better get out of here.

As I walked out the front door and down the long steps—they had already shut off the elevators and all of that; it was dark—I saw a bulk of a man walking away very slowly. I saw that it was Ted Kennedy. I said: Ted, we better get out of here; this place might blow up.

He said: Well, these old legs don't work like they used to.

So I said: Here, put your arm around my shoulders. And I put my arm out to steady him. Someone took our picture. It was in a magazine, and it said: Who said that Republicans are not compassionate.

I always think of that when I think of these bills. I say to my friend, Senator BOXER, with whom I have worked so closely during this time—and I actually enjoyed it: Any time we get a coalition between your philosophy and my philosophy, it has to be right. It was, and it is over.

I yield the floor to Senator BOXER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, my friend and I have long worked together on infrastructure, and we did it this time under very difficult conditions. I would say to him that with his leadership on EPW, going to a markup, proving to the rest of the Senate that, in fact, our committee could work together, we got a 20-to-nothing vote. As a result of that, and as my friend has often said, our committee is really responsible for about 70 to 75 percent of the funding. So we were the key committee, and we proved that we could work together.

It was a little tougher on the other committees. That is when it took Leader MCCONNELL's leadership, Senator DURBIN's leadership, and we came together.

But I must say that those top staffers from Senator INHOFE's team, McConnell's team, Boxer's team, including Bettina Poirier, Neil Chatterjee, and

Alex Herrgott really—friendships forged—worked on, and it was a pleasure to work with them. I will never forget this as long as I live. This has been a highlight of my career, and I have been here a very long time.

I want to thank Andrew Dohrmann, David Napoliello, Tyler Rushforth, Jason Albritton, Ted Illston, Mary Kerr, Kate Gilman, Colin McCarthy, and Kathryn Backer in addition to Bettina, on my team. I want to thank Ryan Jackson, Shant Boyajian, Susan Bodine, Andrew Neely, and Chaya Koffman, along with Alex, on the Inhofe team. I want to thank Alyssa Fisher on the Durbin team. I want to thank Shannon Hines, Jennifer Deci, and Homer Carlisle on the Banking Committee team. I want to thank Kim Lipsky so much. What a job she did for BILL NELSON, and her team, Devon Barnhart and Matt Kelly, and Dave Schweitert on the Thune team.

Notice we said “team.” This was about teamwork. This was not about me, me, me or I, I, I. It was all of us in friendship, in sincerity. We never surprised each other. When we couldn’t do this, something happened, we would tell each other, and we never left the room until we figured it out.

I will have more to write about this and say about it because truly these moments don’t happen often around here. In my career this will stand out as truly spectacular—spectacular—the people who were so dedicated, and my friendship with my friend is just extraordinary. It stood the test of time. My new collegiality with MITCH MCCONNELL, which has not existed until now, this is a miraculous thing that has happened.

One of the things I have learned in life is it goes so fast and sometimes you don’t mark those special moments. This moment will be forever marked with me and with my friends.

We now are going to look forward to working with our friends in the House. We are going to infuse our spirit over there. We are going to make sure they know we can work together and be friends, and it has already started, as ALEX has stated today.

So we are ready for the next phase, the next step. What is most important? We are going to make sure we have infrastructure that works for this Nation; that you and I, JIM, don’t have to stand here and show tragic photos, bridge collapses, and hear terrible stories about construction workers who can’t make it and have to have food stamps, and businessmen who have literally cried in my office because they have no certainty, they can’t function, and they may have to shut down. This is not what we want.

We did the right thing for the country. It wasn’t about us—we were the ones who made it happen—it was about America, and I couldn’t be more proud.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### REMEMBERING REVEREND CLEMENTA PINCKNEY

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, before I start my prepared remarks, I did want to note that today would have been the birthday of Pastor Reverend Clementa Pinckney, a friend of mine, who was the pastor of Emanuel 9, the Emanuel Church, the Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, SC. Today being his birthday, I thought it would be a good opportunity to share with the public that we miss him. We thank God for the family and the amazing roles they have played in South Carolina and around this country.

Certainly, as we tackle issues going forward, I think we should keep in mind, bear in mind, the civility, the grace, and the compassion we saw from Reverend Pinckney and the way he tackled issues with such an important ingredient to keeping our communities together.

I hope as we discuss other challenging issues, we will have an opportunity to remember that civility, that notion that we are better together. The desire to build a bridge should be seen and displayed in the public forum as we discuss issues that sometimes pull at the very fabric of who we are as a nation.

#### SAFER OFFICERS AND SAFER CITIZENS ACT OF 2015

Mr. President, I rise to offer a solution. I will tell you solutions are hard to find at times, but today I think I have found a solution that will help law enforcement officers and our citizens go home safely. That solution is body-worn cameras to be worn by our law enforcement officers throughout this country. Just yesterday, in Cincinnati, we were unfortunately given yet another example of how important body cameras are when they are worn by law enforcement officers.

We, those of us who viewed the video, watched in disbelief as the officer shot the driver in the head. Difficult, difficult video to watch. Cincinnati officials said in their investigation of the death of Samuel Dubose, after being shot by the University of Cincinnati police officer, that body camera footage was invaluable. I want to say that one more time; that the police chief said, without any question, what allowed them to find conclusion, to actually arrest the officer, was the presence of a video that was undeniable.

Unfortunately, we have seen too many of these incidents around the country. I will tell you that I struggle with this issue sometimes because I have so many good friends who are officers, who serve the public every single day with honor, with dignity, and amazing distinction. I am talking about guys and young ladies who put

on the uniform with pride. I see that pride as I walk through the neighborhoods as I talk to folks.

So many of our officers serve this Nation, serve their communities so well, keeping all of us safe, but sometimes, and too often we have seen recently, the videos suggest we have to take a deeper look. Our citizens deserve for us to take that deeper look. I think that without any question a body-worn camera will protect the public, but it will also protect the officer. That is why I am here today.

I have said a couple of times that if they say a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video is worth a thousand pictures. Let me say that one more time. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video is worth a thousand pictures. I believe strongly that an important piece of the puzzle to help rebuild trust with our law enforcement officers and the communities they serve is body-worn cameras.

I say it is only one piece of that very important puzzle because I do not know that there is a single solution. I have looked for a panacea, but I do not know if there is a panacea. As a matter of fact, I think there is not a panacea, but there are many critical steps we must take to tackle an array of issues confronting the distressed communities and challenging circumstances, whether it is poverty, criminal justice reform or, as we have seen on the video, instances of police brutality.

With body cameras, we have seen some amazing studies. At least one study has confirmed there is a 90-percent drop in complaints against officers. That is an astounding number, a 90-percent drop in complaints against officers. The same study shows there is a 60-percent drop in the use of force by officers. This should be good news for everyone on every side of the issue—if there are sides of the issue. I would suggest there are not sides to this issue.

There is not a Republican side, there is not a Democratic side, there is not a Black side, there is not a White side, there is only a right side and a wrong side. If we can find ourselves in a position where officers go home at night to a loving family, arms wide open, and citizens within the community go home at night to loving families and warm embraces, that perhaps the body-worn camera by officers will make this happen more every day someplace in our country.

With those sorts of numbers, how can we not figure out the best way to get these devices into the hands of our police officers? This does not even touch on the fact that when we ended up with the video, a very unfortunate video, on April 4, this year, my hometown, North Charleston, SC—a video of Walter Scott being shot in the back, it helped bring clarity to an incredibly painful situation.

That is why, after months of meetings with dozens of police organizations, civil rights groups, privacy

groups, and others, yesterday I introduced the Safer Officers and Safer Citizens Act of 2015. My goal is simple. It is to simply provide local and State law enforcement agencies with the resources to equip their officers with body-worn cameras. My legislation creates a dedicated grant program, fully paid for—I know there are those in the Senate, such as myself, who like those words “fully paid for”—to help local law enforcement agencies purchase body cameras.

I am opposed, very opposed, to any notion that we should federalize in any way, shape or form local law enforcement. I believe local law enforcement should be in charge of local law enforcement and State law enforcement should be in charge of State law enforcement. But if we can provide some tools, some resources, to make sure the situation I described earlier from a positive standpoint of an officer going home to their house and members of the community going home to their houses after having an interaction, if there is a solution and/or an opportunity to see that happen more often, we should go there.

My grant program would provide \$100 million over the next 5 fiscal years: \$100 million each year, 2016 through 2021, and only requires a simple 25-percent match. It certainly suggests that we will give preferences to departments that are applying for grants. They will need to have their own policies in place regarding data retention, privacy requirements, and other areas because I believe local and State departments, as I have said, can best determine their own procedures around the body cameras.

As States and localities around the country implement body-worn camera programs, I believe this is the best way we can help—not take over but provide that seed capital, the resources to start a brand-new conversation all over the country about how many lives have been saved, how many folks get to go home.

I will say this on some other points. I had the privilege of speaking at the graduation of who I call my brother, who is the son of my mentor, John Moniz, who helped change my life when I was a kid on the wrong course for a long time—I had the privilege of speaking at Brian Moniz's graduation from the police academy just 2 years ago, July 18—a couple of years ago. He is an amazing young man who wants to serve his community. His brother Philip is also a fellow sheriff's deputy.

So when I think about the words I am speaking today, I don't think about it in legislative terms, I think about it in terms of real places and real people, such as my brothers and others who want to serve the country. But I also think about it in terms of real people who have suffered through those violent interactions.

I am thankful that cosponsors such as Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM of South Carolina and CORY BOOKER of New Jer-

sey have joined me in making sure we start the conversation that I hope to continue with Senator GRASSLEY on this important topic.

I ask that we all remember the words of Mrs. Judy Scott, the mother of Walter Scott, who lost her son in my hometown of North Charleston. I have had the chance to speak to her on a number of occasions since the incident. She has taught me a lot. She has taught me the power of forgiveness. Very quickly afterward she showed no animus toward the officer. She was praying for the officer. She forgave the officer. But her request to me was a very simple request. It was simply that no more mothers have to unnecessarily bury their sons the way she did. That is a very simple request.

I think my body camera legislation will help us achieve that goal. I believe this legislation will protect citizens and law enforcement officers. It will bridge the gap that seems to be growing in some communities around the country. It will provide resources without taking over local law enforcement. I believe this is critically important, and the sooner we get there, the better off our Nation will be.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

#### TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, as we speak, there are American trade negotiators in Hawaii from the Pacific Rim and South America negotiating the final terms of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP.

I rise today to speak about an element of those negotiations which I find troubling and which I believe, if it goes on its current path, will produce a gross injustice that will be harmful to American job creators and could potentially threaten the passage or ratification of the TPP.

I understand that the current proposal of the Trans-Pacific Partnership calls for discriminatory treatment of tobacco—specifically singling out an entire industry. It is an industry that is vitally important to my home State of North Carolina. Tobacco continues to be vitally important among North Carolinian agricultural exports, and the only path to sustaining this industry is to preserve the place for the American leaf in the world. The industry supports more than 22,000 jobs in North Carolina, my home State.

I rise today to defend farmers, manufacturers, and exporters from discriminatory treatment in our trade agreements. Today it happens to be tobacco, but I will do this for any crop for as long as I am in the Senate. I am well aware that many States aren't touched by tobacco farming or tobacco product manufacturing, but this is not just about tobacco; this is about American values and fairness.

I believe free trade is good, and a balanced free trade benefits all parties. For those who think free trade is bad for America, I don't agree. When America and Americans compete on a level

playing field, we win the vast majority of the time. It is what we do.

But the United States, over the years, has tried to do more with these agreements than just haggle for market access and tariff productions. Over the past 30 years, the United States has commonly negotiated what is called the investor-state dispute settlement—or ISDS—language in a number of international agreements. The ISDS provisions are fairly simple. They give someone who believes their trade agreement rights have been violated by another government trading partner the ability to bring a claim against that government before an international arbitration panel.

All kinds of offenses can be addressed through the ISDS process—protecting American-owned businesses by requiring our trading partners to meet minimum standards of treatment under international law; protecting American-owned businesses from having their property taken away without payment or adequate compensation; and protecting American-owned businesses from discriminatory, unfair, or arbitrary treatment. That is a fundamental protection. If these sound like American ideals, it is because they are. American ingenuity, combined with these values and ideals, has produced the world's greatest economy, the American economy.

Regions of the world that do not share the same views of due process, equality under the law, and protection of private property rights would do well to follow our model. It will make them a better trading partner, and it will help their economies thrive.

Yet, even the U.S. negotiators apparently want to be selective in applying these ideals, and that is really the root of the concern I have with the discussions going on now in Hawaii. We cannot afford to be selective when it comes to fairness. Our negotiators have concluded that while some investors are entitled to equal treatment under the law, others aren't. It is odd to me that this would be the posture of any nation, but it is particularly troubling that this is the current posture of the negotiators who were responsible for negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

It is ironic that the ideal of equal treatment and due process is being peddled with our trading partners as equal treatment and due process for everyone but some members of the minority. So let's say, my fellow Senators, that you are not from a State that is harmed by the current negotiations. You may feel comfortable that this could never happen to you, to a sector in your State's economy, but I believe you should be worried. The current proposal on the TPP creates an entirely new precedent, a precedent that will no doubt become the norm for future trade agreements where the negotiators get to pick and choose winners and losers and American businesses and American industries will suffer as a result. Once we

allow an entire sector to be treated unfairly in trade agreements, the question is, Who is next?

I hold a sincere belief that unfair treatment for one agricultural commodity significantly heightens the risk that more unfair treatment for another commodity lurks right around the corner.

I have not spoken with a single organization, agricultural or otherwise, that believes this sets a good precedent—quite the contrary. I encourage my colleagues to speak to their State's agricultural community and simply ask them what they think about setting this kind of standard.

To my fellow Senators—and, incidentally, I should say for those of you in the Gallery, we are working today; we are just outside of the Gallery. I know this is kind of like showing up at the zoo and one of your favorite animals being off of an exhibit. But they are out working; they will be back at about 1:45.

To get back to the script, if you believe that this unfair treatment is OK because it is about tobacco and that it is a fair outcome, I think you ought to think again because I will remind you—and our fellow Senators need to understand this—that Congress has spoken on this issue. We exist to make sure we take care of the voice that may not be heard, the minority who may be cast aside because of some agenda or because of it just being an easy negotiating tactic.

But in this particular case, Congress has spoken loudly. I will remind my Members that Congress has said opportunities for U.S. agricultural exports must be “substantially equivalent to opportunities afforded foreign exports in U.S. markets.” Now, with this trade agreement, if you have a trading partner agree with the behavior or decisions made in the United States, they are going to be subject to due process. But this trade agreement would actually allow our trading partners to not allow us to be held to that same standard in their country of jurisdiction and not go to international arbitration. Congress has stated that dispute settlement mechanisms must be available across the board, not selectively.

I also voted to give the President trade promotion authority to allow trade agreements like the TPP to move through Congress in a quick, orderly, and responsible process. That is the process we are going through right now. I did not vote to give our negotiators the freedom to indiscriminately choose when fairness should be applied and when it shouldn't be applied. The Congress has already spoken. I hope you will at least share the expectation that our negotiations carry out our will.

I applaud the efforts of the U.S. negotiators. I know it is difficult work, and I congratulate them for getting closer to completing the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. I hope, however, that they will consider the risk of los-

ing support for the Senate to ratify the agreement.

In closing, I would offer this to anyone who believes my sticking up for tobacco or for equal treatment and American values is shortsighted: I want you to know that I would do this for any commodity, any category, and any industry. I hope our trade negotiators will work hard to ensure that American values are upheld in the final agreement they bring before Congress, and that goes for language in the entire agreement, even that which appears in the annexes and the footnotes.

I, for one—and I think many of my colleagues—am concerned with the current status of the trade negotiations in this particular area. There are a number of good things in it. This needs to be worked out. And I will not support and I will work hard against any trade agreement that departs from our core values.

#### VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I wish to address the status of VA health care and the Department's current budget shortfall.

I am grudgingly supporting the bill before this body to extend highway funding for 3 months and to provide budget transfer authority to VA because, without it, highway contracts in Vermont and all across the country will be halted and VA will be unable to provide health care services to our veterans. These initiatives are too important not to support, but I want to be on record as saying this is a very dangerous path to be treading down—playing politics with the VA's funding. It is disingenuous and is a disservice to the brave men and women who have served our country.

On July 31, 2014, 1 year ago tomorrow, the Senate passed the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act to address the crisis at the Department of Veterans Affairs. As chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, one of my top priorities during the negotiation of that legislation was to ensure VA had the resources needed to prevent a similar crisis in the future.

I believed then—and I believe now—that, overall, the Department of Veterans Affairs provides high-quality health care; health care that veterans consistently give high satisfaction scores. But the crisis at VA last year was real—too many veterans were waiting far too long for care. And some VA employees were manipulating data to make it appear these wait times did not exist.

At the time, we took serious, important steps to address the crisis. We gave the Department tools to hold staff accountable, provided funding for veterans who had trouble accessing care at VA to get that care in the private sector, and gave VA resources to ramp up capacity—to hire health care providers and make improvements to the agency's crumbling infrastructure. The bill we passed last year was to ensure that a similar crisis wouldn't happen again.

But here we are, 1 year later, facing another crisis in VA health care. But this crisis is different. This is a funding crisis. A crisis Congress could have prevented.

Given the increased demand for care and volume of veteran patients, I hoped Congress would have understood the need at VA and provided the funding needed by the Department. But that hasn't happened. Instead, this Republican-led Congress underfunded VA by \$1 billion in their budget resolution. And they have continued the bad policies of the Budget Control Act, subjecting VA to funding caps that hamstringing the Department's ability to provide needed care.

And let me be clear about something here: these caps are arbitrary spending cuts and have nothing to with how much money VA actually needs to operate. And, despite common misconception, VA is subject to these caps just like every other Federal Department. I believe we must lift these caps. Lift them so VA has the money it needs to take care of veterans, period.

And if we are unwilling to lift the budget caps, we should at least be providing this funding through an emergency appropriation. We should be acknowledging that the caps mean we are coming up short—that Congress has insufficiently funded VA, tying their hands so they are left unable to pay for the health care services veterans want and need.

But instead, we are considering transferring money from one bucket at VA to another. The bill we are considering today will move money from the Choice Program to the general operating budget. Congress created the Veterans Choice Program to address a specific problem. And we provided \$10 billion to fix that problem. And now, instead of lifting the budget caps or providing emergency funding for VA, we are just going to use the Choice Program as a piggy bank. We are simply robbing Peter to pay Paul. This approach is a short-term fix, keeping VA's doors open for the next 60 days. But it does nothing to address the long-term budget shortfall VA will face next year, and the year after that. And I worry, if we fail to act responsibly now, we'll be right back here in 2016 and again in 2017, when we will no longer have the luxury of being able to raid billions from the Choice Program, and our veterans will be no better off.

Not only is this method of funding VA irresponsible, my Republican colleagues are using this funding crisis to jam bad policies down our throats without careful consideration or a real debate. With just days to go before we adjourn for the August recess, and with our colleagues from the House having already skipped town, we are being backed into a corner—told the only way to get VA the money they need is to pass a bad piece of legislation filled with unrelated policies.

Last week, during a markup of legislation in the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Chairman ISAKSON stated multiple times that he wanted new policies to go through regular order, to be considered by the committee in a legislative hearing before being voted on by committee members and certainly before being voted on by the full Senate. He also stated numerous times that we should not be passing legislation without paying for it.

The Congressional Budget Office score of the bill appears to show the legislation is paid for. However, the reality is there are \$1.2 billion in lost revenues included in the VA title of the bill that are being swept under the rug. These enormous, unnecessary costs are being covered up by offsets intended to pay for transfers from the general fund to the highway trust fund. These are not savings or revenue that will actually pay for the lost revenues in the VA title. They are savings and revenue intended to make much-needed repairs to roads and bridges. And I fully support those funds being used the way they were intended. But what I do not support is that we are turning a blind eye to \$1.2 billion in costs in the VA title of this bill that have nothing at all to do with the funding shortfall at VA. So what are these policies that are so important that they should not be considered through regular order and take money out of critical transportation infrastructure projects?

They are anti-veteran, anti-small business provisions that threaten to strip veterans of their access to affordable health care and treat them as second-class citizens in the workplace while putting new administrative burdens on small business owners.

If Members really believe these unrelated policies are necessary, we should spend time on them. We should use the committee process that Senator ISAKSON talked about just last week in the Veterans' Affairs Committee markup to consider them through regular order. We should debate them on the Senate floor. But we should not link these politically motivated provisions to must-pass legislation to provide critical health care services to millions of veterans who need it.

It used to be the case that Congress kept veterans above politics. Despite fierce debate over going to war, we all agreed that when servicemembers came home from war, we would take care of them.

It is sad to say, that is no longer the case. Today, powerful political contributors like the Koch brothers are using veterans to push forward anti-worker, anti-union legislation under the guise of caring for veterans. They want to strip away the rights and protections of workers and will use any means necessary to accomplish those goals, even if it means using VA employees who serve veterans every day—and many of whom are veterans themselves—as the target.

Congress should stand up and be honest with the American people about the

reason for the VA budget crisis—that members of this Chamber would rather stand here trying to score political points. They would rather use veterans as pawns to promote their anti-worker, anti-union, anti-health care agenda, even if it means closing hospitals and local clinics.

Let us not do that, instead let us say to the brave men and women who have served our country in uniform that we will put aside our differences and give VA the funding they need. Just as our veterans promised to fight for our country, we promised to take care of them when they came home. They fulfilled their promise to us. It is time for us to fulfill our promise to them.

Mr. TILLIS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, in a couple of minutes we will be voting on a bill that includes a transfer of \$3.4 billion within accounts of the Veterans' Administration to make possible, literally enable VA to continue providing health care for millions of veterans across the United States. We are in this situation because of, quite frankly, gross ineptitude in planning that can be characterized only as management malpractice.

This crisis emphasizes the importance of accountability, and I thank the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator ISAKSON, for his leadership in addressing the shortfall and also in his cooperation in meeting the crisis and accountability of management that the VA continues to face.

This crisis must stop. Congress cannot be expected to continue to bail out the VA because of mismanagement and management malpractice.

In the longer term, there is a need for fundamental reform. There are some good ideas in this bill. I have supported many of them. I thank Senator TESTER for his leadership as well in framing a proposal that addresses these issues.

But make no mistake. This bill is only one small step toward the reform that I have been advocating and will continue to champion, and hope to continue to work on specifics to advance, as the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Again, I thank my colleagues and our chairman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate has a previous order at this time.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. I thank the ranking member for his comments.

This is the first step for reform in the VA. We are beginning to move in the right direction.

I urge a "yes" vote.

# SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND VETERANS HEALTH CARE CHOICE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3236, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3236) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund, to provide resource flexibility to the Department of Veterans Affairs for health care services, and for other purposes.

The bill was ordered to a third reading, and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 261 Leg.]

## YEAS—91

Ayotte	Ernst	Merkley
Baldwin	Feinstein	Mikulski
Barrasso	Fischer	Murkowski
Bennet	Flake	Murphy
Blumenthal	Franken	Murray
Blunt	Gardner	Nelson
Booker	Gillibrand	Paul
Boozman	Grassley	Perdue
Boxer	Hatch	Peters
Brown	Heinrich	Portman
Burr	Heitkamp	Reed
Cantwell	Heller	Reid
Capito	Hirono	Risch
Cardin	Hoeben	Roberts
Carper	Inhofe	Rounds
Casey	Isakson	Rubio
Cassidy	Johnson	Sanders
Coats	Kaine	Schumer
Cochran	King	Scott
Collins	Kirk	Shaheen
Coons	Klobuchar	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Stabenow
Cotton	Leahy	Sullivan
Crapo	Manchin	Tester
Cruz	Markey	Thune
Daines	McCain	Tillis
Donnelly	McCaskill	Toomey
Durbin	McConnell	
Enzi	Menendez	